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CDPM

COMISSÃO PARA OS DIREITOS DO POVO MAUBERE

Commission for the Rights of the Maubere People

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Submission to the

UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON DECOLONIZATION

Presented by José Maria Albuquerque

New York, 23 July 1996

Mr. Chairman,

Thank you for giving our organisation, the CDPM (Commission for the Rights of the Maubere People), the opportunity to address this Committee on the subject of Indonesia's colonization of East Timor.

The eradication of colonialism by the end of the decade is one of the UN's stated coveted aims. Pursuit of this promising goal has led the Decolonization Committee to meet once again, embodying the hopes of those Peoples still living under the yoke of foreign domination.

In contrast with the trend of the 1940s and 50s, not only does colonialism seem to be not disappearing from relations between peoples, but it has actually been gathering new vitality over the past 20 years, as can be seen in East Timor, Western Sahara, Kurdistan and Tibet.

Changing political scenes around the globe have spawned paradoxical situations which would have been unthinkable a few decades ago. Colonized peoples are still the same peoples as before, but the colonizers are now others. Some of these new colonizers are States which emerged after long and grueling struggles against persistent forms of European colonization. They are all States which, within the community of Nations, used to be the staunchest and most outspoken opponents of colonialism - of which they themselves had been victims.

East Timor (the most densely populated of the non-autonomous territories under review by the Committee) is an example of such blatant contradiction. After 450 years of Portuguese colonization, the territory is now subjected to a new colonial regime imposed by the dictatorship of Indonesia, the same Indonesia that used to be one of the most vociferous members of the anti-colonialist movement that sprang up this century!

I am not going to embark now on an analysis of the mechanisms which transform a State, itself born out of anti-colonial struggle, into a colonial power, although such analysis could well be vital in the eradication of these aberrant systems. I would just like to present some facts about the true nature of Jakarta's regime in East Timor, so that the mask of Indonesia's anti-colonial past may be removed once and for all.

In recent years, it has been gratifying to see that condemnation of colonialism in East Timor is being echoed increasingly within Indonesia itself. Critical awareness grows, as some sectors of Indonesian society attempt to fathom the Timorese people's tenacious rejection of the "happiness" and "progress" "offered" to them by the Jakarta regime.

Mr. Chairman,

Today, on the basis of information from Indonesian sources, it is possible to expose the propaganda and practices of East Timor's new colonialists. Indonesian colonialism in the territory is said to be a carbon copy of Portugal's, with no innovation whatsoever, a mere extension of the previous masters' performance.

1. From the day they disembarked in Timor, Indonesians have looked upon the Timorese as a "primitive and backward community". Indonesia is compelling the Timorese regard their own culture as being inferior. In spite of the fact that the Timorese speak in their vernacular, Tetum, Timorese children are forced to learn the language (as well as the history and ideology) of their country's occupier. The following excerpt from a letter, addressed to international human rights organisations, from the parents of one of the youngsters murdered at Santa Cruz in November 1991, illustrates the problem:

> "We are a people with a national identity which has developed over generations. Our culture, traditions, language, customs and religion set us apart from others, particularly from Indonesians. We were brought up with deep-rooted values which, despite our weakness and poverty as a people, underline the strength of our personality, and difference to Indonesians."

By implementing a policy apparently designed to deliberately stamp out Timorese culture, Indonesia actively encourages dozens of thousands of Indonesian citizens to migrate and settle in East Timor, and to take over the most fertile land and occupy the best jobs (namely in the civil service).

2. With regards the Jakarta regime's 'development' of East Timor, according to a study done by Indonesian researcher Paul Salim, "the Suharto Regime claimed to have constructed 524 kms of sealed roads (...) in East Timor, while in fact, the Regime only constructed a maximum of 10 kms of sealed roads (...)." To make matters worse, nearly all roads were built for military purposes, that is to more effectively control over the people and guerrillas, thereby contributing to the genocide of the Timorese.

On the subject of new hospital building, the same report has this to say: "The Suharto Regime lies to the world once again about the construction of health care facilities in East Timor."

Indonesia claims it has built 8 new hospitals (in contrast to 2 built by the Portuguese administration) since it occupied East Timor. In reality, this claim is no more than an attempt to whitewash reality, as the 'new' buildings were actually structures built in Portuguese colonial times which the Indonesians inherited.

Indonesian propaganda also claims that there are now 14 times more health clinics and hospital mother and baby units. A clinic in Indonesia ("klinik"/"puskesmas") provides very inadequate health care, and is staffed by one or two inexperienced doctors. These are invariably newly qualified doctors straight out of Indonesian universities, who are recruited by the Indonesian regime and obliged to work for their first three years in areas designated by the regime itself. The "puskesmas" throughout Indonesia and East Timor are, therefore,

usually run by these newly qualified young doctors, without any back up whatsoever from medical specialists.

Indonesia's claim that it has set up 180 "puskesmas" is not, therefore, so surprising since it was only required to employ 120 inexperienced doctors to do so.

Paradoxically, in spite of Indonesia's claims about its achievements in health care in East Timor, the territory in fact has the highest infant mortality rate of all the least populated territories and countries in the world , according to the UN Population Fund's 1996 Report. Meanwhile, malaria is still endemic and tuberculosis affects over 50% of the Timorese population. This alone speaks volumes about the extent and quality of the health services provided by the Indonesian occupier.

The situation with regards education is no better. Suharto's regime claims to have built 550 primary schools. This is completely untrue: the real figure is around 140 schools, at which all traces of Timorese culture are being very effectively erased. Only one language and culture - both foreign - are taught to the children. Illiteracy among the Timorese is extremely high, and in the region of 50% of the population.

Another fact revealed by Paul Salim's report reflects the extent of the repression in East Timor. It is significant that most Timorese students are refused permission to study abroad. According to Paul Salim, this is, "not caused by unavailable funds, but due to the fact that almost every East Timorese sent overseas requests political asylum in the country where he or she is studying,"

3. East Timor's economy and resources are subjects which the Indonesian occupier has clearly preferred not to comment on over the past 21 years. According to Paul Salim's research study, "East Timor's exports have declined tremendously since annexation by the Suharto Regime" and "during Portuguese rule, the ratio of overseas imports and exports (...) always ranged between 1.2 and 2.4 Today, under Indonesia, East Timor's imports are 12.4 times as much as its exports. It means that East Timor has been converted (...) into the biggest importer!!"

Paradoxically, the increased oil and natural gas exports (spoils from the illegal exploration of the Timor Gap) do not seem to have helped to balance this ratio, in spite of the fact that the massive oil and gas resources are the territory's greatest natural wealth (and the main underlying reason for Indonesia's invasion in 1975).

Indonesia is also busy milking East Timor of its other natural resources. According to Indonesian academic George Aditjondro, living in exile in Australia, the Batara Indra group, with which Generals Benny Murdani, Bading Kalbuadi and Sahala Rajagukguk (involved in crimes of genocide in East Timor in 1975/76) are associated, has made a fortune from the sale of Timorese coffee, sandalwood and marble, and from the tourist trade.

In the 1990s, however, another group emerged and is competing for East Timor's natural wealth. It is called "(...) Anak Liambau Group (and) is owned by the family of the current Indonesia-appointed Governor, Abilio Osorio, a protégé of Suharto's son-in-law, Prabowo Djojohadikusumo."

Meanwhile, two of Suharto's daughters, Tutut and Titi (Prabowo's wife) are likewise involved in the lucrative coffee and sandalwood industries, while two of the dictator's sons, Bambang Trihatmojo and Sigit Harjojudanto, hold the monopoly on nine telecommunications projects in East Timor. Even one of Suharto's grandsons, Arie Haryo

Wibowo, has managed to grab some of the loot for himself by levying "alcohol tax" on all alcoholic drinks sold in East Timor (after being granted the same privilege in various Indonesian regions).

Very little is left for the Timorese themselves. Most of the population lives in dire poverty and unemployment is soaring. According to a study recently presented by the Vice Dean of the University of East Timor, Armindo Maia, "over 80% of the territory's economy depends on subsidies from Jakarta", while the infrastructures necessary for an independent economy are not being set up. According to the same source, "the Indonesian authorities seem to want to create a situation in which the problem of Timor appears to be a social and economic problem, rather than the political one which, in fact, it really is."

Mr. Chairman,

On the question of the occupation itself, the academic George Aditjondro has said that there are at least

> "(...) ten to twelve battalions which are currently on 'civic mission,' (that) do not consist of locals, but come from all major islands in the Indonesian territory, such as the 141 and 142 battalions from Sumatra, the 320, 411 and 521 battalions from Java (...). In which Indonesian province can one find so many military troops who do not consist of locals? Is the presence of these non-local troops a trade mark of an Indonesian province or the trade mark of a colony?
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> "Apart from the presence of these 'official troops,' an unknown number of plain-clothes military personnel operate in East Timor, who mainly consist of members of the Army's elite corps, Kopassus (...), whose commanding unit in East Timor is known by the abbreviation SGI. This brings back the spectre of the Portuguese secret police, PIDE."

The regime's true colours were revealed by Colonel Mahidin Simbolon, Military Commander of occupation forces in East Timor, when he came out with the most blatantly colonial statement of the past 21 years. The essence of what he said was: We will use Timorese to fight against the Timorese.

George Aditjondro also said that

> "(In) All these colonial acts, the occupation forces have been aided by East Timor collaborators, some of whom were recruited from families of well-known East Timor freedom fighters (...). By applying this old colonial 'divide-and-rule' tactic within prominent East Timorese families, the occupation forces were desperately and unsuccessfully trying to persuade the East Timorese to keep their Indonesian citizenship."

Mr. Chairman,

The United Nations has proved to be totally incapable of dealing with situations such as this, and completely impotent when it comes to finding solutions. Commander Xanana Gusmão was right on target when he asked the United Nations the following question:

> "Could it be that colonialism is only significant when it is practised by whites?"[7]

The international community must, as a matter of urgency, adopt a different attitude before colonialism becomes permanently rooted in the relations between peoples.

The United Nations has to institute, as it did in the not too distant past, a well-defined framework to effectively discourage colonial practices. This will certainly not be achieved

by putting an end to the Decolonization Committee, as a result of the campaign to straighten out UN finances. That campaign will never manage to eradicate colonialism by the end of this or any other decade.

Contrary to the statement reportedly made by Mr. Utula Utuoksama, Chairman of this Committee,[8] "East Timor's integration into Indonesia is not a fact." History has taught us that all colonial empires must come to an end. Being Portuguese, we know this from experience. The Suharto regime, like its European models, will definitely not be an exception to the rule.

Thank you.

Notes:

1. *Angkatan Bersunjata,* 24 October 1985
2. "HUT ke 19 Integrasi Illegal Timor Timur," July 1995
3. *"A Capital,"* 29 May 1996. According to this Portuguese newspaper, infant mortality in occupied East Timor is 135 per 1,000 births, and is three times higher than in Indonesia.
4. Speech at Dili Massacre Commemoration Rally in Perth, 12 November, 1995
5. *Diario de Notícias,* 24 June 1996
6. *Público,* 24 June 1996
7. Message addressed to the UN Special Committee on Decolonization, July 1992
8. *Kompas,* 24 June 1996